



## Public Statement

### **The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the ongoing harassment of lawyer Bakhrom Khamroev in Russia**

Toronto, ON – The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the ongoing harassment of lawyer Bakhrom Khamroev in Russia.

Bakhrom Khamroev is a human rights lawyer and the head of Erdam, an organization that works to protect Central Asian migrant workers in Russia. He is known for representing persecuted Uzbekistani political refugees.

It has recently come to the Law Society's attention that on September 29, 2016, 20 armed officers from the Federal Security Service ("FSB") conducted an eight-hour raid on Bakhrom Khamroev's home in Moscow, confiscating various documents and technical equipment. He was detained and taken FSB headquarters where he was questioned about his political viewpoints and his knowledge of two Uzbekistanis who had been charged with terrorism for their alleged involvement in the Islamic political organization "Hizb ut-Tahrir". He was told he was now a witness in the case against the two Uzbekistanis. Bakhrom Khamroev had previously represented these two individuals on a separate matter. He was later released, but warned that he would be summoned for further questioning.

According to reports, Bakhrom Khamroev has been targeted in the past for his human rights work. Prior to the abovementioned incident, he had been convicted and sentenced to 1.5 years imprisonment on fabricated drug possession charges. He was later released on parole. Additionally, Bakhrom Khamroev has been attacked by both unknown assailants and FSB officers on five separate occasions. While criminal investigations were opened by the Russian authorities for some of the attacks, no suspects were ever identified or brought to justice.

The Law Society is concerned that the raid, the seizure of Bakhrom Khamroev's property and his detention and questioning are an attempt to intimidate him and prevent him from continuing to represent migrant workers and Uzbekistan citizens living in the Russian Federation.

The Law Society of Upper Canada urges the Government of Russia to comply with Russia's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

Article 18 states:

Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

The Law Society urges the Government of Russia to:

- a. put an end to all acts of harassment against Bakhrom Khamroev;
- b. to return to Bakhrom Khamroev the property confiscated from his residence by the Federal Security Service;
- c. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Bakhrom Khamroev; and
- d. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

*The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society. The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.*

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